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RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA PRIORITY 1360
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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [TI](#)

SUBJECT: DPT ACTING LEADER: "WE DON'T FEEL YOUR SUPPORT"

REF: A) DUSHANBE 0151 B) CEP20020206027174

CLASSIFIED BY: Richard E. Hoagland, Ambassador, EXEC, Embassy
Dushanbe.

REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

¶1. (C) The Ambassador and PolOff met for an hour on February 6 with Deputy Chairman of the Democratic Party of Tajikistan (DPT), Rahmatullo Valiyev. The imprisoned Mahmadrusi Iskandarov is still the DPT's titular head. The meeting was within the context of a DPT effort, as evidenced by its February 6 press release, to engage foreign embassies and international organizations to press for Iskandarov's release. In fact, Valiyev had little to say on this account and, instead, made a long and sometimes emotional plea for more overt U.S. support for his party.

¶2. (C) Valiyev opened by noting Russian Ambassador Ramazan Abdulatipov has already endorsed President Rahmonov for re-election this year and commented, properly, that this is interference in Tajikistan's internal affairs (refs). He accused the U.S. Embassy of "going silent" on support for democracy and independent media - "We don't feel your support" - and made a veiled request for U.S. financial support for his party, because its membership base is urban intelligentsia "who are poor." Although independent polls show the DPT with only about 1.5% support in the Tajik electorate, Valiyev argued that his party's real support is at least 60%, "because the one million Tajiks who have gone to Russia to work have done so because they hate Rahmonov." (COMMENT: His glaring fallacy is that they are all, therefore, DPT supporters. END COMMENT.)

¶3. (C) The Ambassador explained that the United States supports the democratic process, not specific parties and personalities.

He noted his widely publicized December speech to youth activists calling for greater democracy and independent media, and reminded Valiyev that U.S. NGOs continue to work to build civil society in Tajikistan, which is the long-term foundation for true democracy. The Ambassador further noted that he and his colleagues continue to work intensively through quiet diplomacy to keep Tajikistan from going further down the wrong path, but he acknowledge this is frustrating for Tajikistan's democratic forces because it is not visible cannot be publicized. The Ambassador noted it would be as inappropriate for him or the U.S. Embassy to endorse the DPT as Abdulatipov's open support for Rahmonov.

¶4. (C) Valiyev criticized the International Monetary Fund for forgiving Tajikistan's \$99 million debt under the Highly Indebted Poor Countries mandate, and he said the United States should "stop giving Rahmonov money." The Ambassador explained that U.S. assistance funds programs, not the government and individuals, and is for activities in the interest of the nation and people of Tajikistan, like border security and counter-narcotics. Valiyev acquiesced but disagreed with the strategy, because his view is the sooner Rahmonov is "cut off," the sooner the DPT can come to power. (COMMENT: According to independent polls, without the President's Peoples Democratic Party in the mix, the Communist Party and the Islamic Renaissance Party would rise to the top of the lists at this time. END COMMENT.)

¶5. (C) Valiyev criticized U.S. exchange programs for sending Tajik government officials, who are predominantly from the President's party, to the United States. The Ambassador explained that exchange participants are chosen not for their political party allegiance, but for their expertise and likelihood of rising to more important positions in the future.

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He emphasized that we find many reform-minded younger officials whom we want to encourage.

¶6. (C) Valiyev reminded us that he had sent Secretary Rice a letter shortly after her October 13 visit to Dushanbe, asking her to intervene for Iskandarov at the European Court of Justice. He asked, in the name of his party presidium, if she had yet done so. The Ambassador assured Valiyev that the Secretary surely had read his letter, but that it would be

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inappropriate for her to intervene in a court action on behalf of an individual.

¶7. (C) Valiyev pressed that only the United States can bring democracy to Tajikistan - neither Russia, China, nor Iran will do so. The Ambassador assured Valiyev that working to enlarge the democratic space in Tajikistan is one of his highest priorities.

¶8. (C) COMMENT: The three so-called democratic parties in Tajikistan have miniscule support, in part because they are to varying degrees personality-based, and also because they do not have a critical mass of party workers to build broader support. Also, none at this time has a savvy and charismatic politician as a leader. That said, should such a leader improbably emerge, Rahmonov would certainly quash him, as he did Iskandarov. While we must acknowledge that Rahmonov's action against Iskandarov was politically motivated, we also should not forget in a more unguarded moment in the past Valiyev admitted to the Ambassador that Iskandarov had surely been corrupt when he was Chairman of TojikGaz - "He's a rich man! How do you think he got his money?" - one of the charges on which he was eventually convicted. We continue to believe that the Tajik people would naturally gravitate toward a populist democratic leader, should one ever emerge. However, at this time, no such leader exists. Our long-term task is to remain committed to building civil society in Tajikistan. There is no reason democracy cannot blossom here, but it will not happen in the short term. END COMMENT.

